NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1897 by Street & Smith, in the office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C.
Entered as second class matter at the New York, N. Y., Post Office.
Issued weekly. Subscription price, $2.50 per year. February 20, 1897.

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TR... IS PRISONER FELL FROM THE TRAIN TO ALMOST CERTAIN DEATH.

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TRIM'S TROUBLESOME TIGER;

OR,

HOW HIS PRISONER ESCAPED THE GALLOWS.

By the Author of "NICK CARTER."

CHAPTER I.

A PUZZLED DETECTIVE.

"Stop thief!"

One would have supposed that Adelaide Street was filled with crooks, for at these words, shouted in a high, clear voice, at least a hundred persons stood still and looked around to see what was the matter.

It was in the middle of the afternoon and the great thoroughfare was alive with shoppers.

Only one person within sound of the voice seemed to be wholly unconcerned.

This was a rather tall, gentlemanly-looking man, who was walking at a moderate pace. He neither turned his head nor quickened his pace when the words rang out.

Others who heard the cry and turned aside interestedly saw a young man run excitedly up to this quiet gentleman, seize him by the shoulders and whirl him around violently.

"What do you mean?" cried the gentleman, raising his cane threateningly.

"I yelled stop thief," retorted the young man, "and you are the only man in Sydney who didn't have the sense to obey.

"You're the man I want. Come along."

With this the young fellow caught the gentleman by the sleeve of his coat and began to pull him across the street.

"Hold on, there! Hold on, there, you young ruffian!" shouted the man, trying to disengage his arm so that he could give the young fellow a blow with his cane.

"Not so fast, there. I'll have you arrested for assault."

"No, you won't," was the blunt response. "You'll be jugged for thieving and swindling, and I reckon there'll be a charge against you which will connect you with the Tigers."

At the mention of this last word the gentleman's face paled slightly.

He had resisted the young fellow's attempt to pull him along, with the result that both were standing still now in the gutter.

A crowd was collecting, of course.

The young fellow, still holding to the gentleman's arm so that he could not use

his cane, spoke again, always keeping his voice at a high pitch so that he could be heard a block or two away.

"You're one of the Tigers and I know it—understand?"

"I don't know what you mean," the man exclaimed, indignantly. "If you're not an escaped lunatic I'll certainly have you punished for assaulting a gentleman——"

"You'll sing a different tune before I get through with you, Brother Ransom," cried the young fellow.

The man thus addressed scowled and looked inquiringly at the faces of the surrounding crowd.

His antagonist did the same, casting quick, keen glances in every direction, as if looking for a face that he hoped to see.

"Here you are, Bobby!" the young fellow exclaimed as he saw a policeman pushing his way through the group. "Here's a prisoner for you."

"Well, Trim," said a voice just behind him, "what have you got this time?"

The young fellow turned with a pleased look in his eyes, let go the man he had tackled, and responded:

"I'm glad you came along just now, Captain Pemberton. You had better have this fellow taken care of, for he'll be useful to us."

"What do you charge him with, Trim?"

"He's one of the Tigers."

"You don't say!"

"Sure of it, but what is more to the point just now, he is one of the pair of swindlers that put up the job on Partington's jewelry store. Do you remember?"

"Yes," replied Captain Pemberton, "and I'm not likely to forget it as soon as this. Take him in."

The last words were addressed to the policeman, who promptly proceeded to take Trim's prisoner away.

"Do you want to go to the station with him now?" asked the captain.

"No," Trim responded. "Let him wait there a while."

Trim put his arm through the captain's and together they walked rapidly away from the crowd.

It was the day upon which Trim had broken up a great conspiracy of convicts and their allies upon the outside of the prison.

There had been an uprising within the prison itself and a conspiracy by professional crooks to bring about a general release of all the convicts.

Trim had joined a chain gang and had completely foiled the plans of the conspirators, with the result that many of them had been captured.

The details of this work have been printed in "Trim on the Safety Valve," No. 7 of the NEW NICK CARTER LIBRARY.

In the course of his investigations Trim had discovered that the crooks, both within and without the jail, were led by a mysterious person addressed only as "your highness."

Among the leaders in the conspiracy was a notorious crook named Jeremiah Schruggs.

Trim had passed some time in the headquarters of this gang, a respectable-looking dwelling house in Balmain, one of the suburbs of Sydney.

Both Schruggs and the mysterious highness had escaped arrest, and immediately after the exciting events of the morning when Trim had recaptured a steamer that was in the hands of the convicts, he had prepared to follow up the investigation with the purpose of capturing both Schruggs and his mysterious chief.

Captain Pemberton, the head of the detective force of Sydney, had just come from the criminal court, where he had entered the charges against such of the conspirators as had been arrested, when he happened to see Trim in the act of collaring the man named Ransom.

"Well, Trim," said the captain as they walked along, "you stirred up quite a little excitement. Now what is it all about? I suppose you had some purpose in shouting so loud and making such a racket?"

"Yes," Trim replied. "I'd a purpose, but I reckon it hasn't come to anything."

"Why?"

"Well, I didn't see the man I wanted to."

"Do you mean that you have had a prisoner arrested who is innocent?"

"Oh, no; Ransom is a crook. It was this way, captain:

"While I was following up Schruggs I

saw Ransom take part in the shoplifting scheme at Partington's jewelry store. Later I heard Ransom's name mentioned in such a familiar way while Schruggs was talking with his highness that I'm pretty certain he belongs to the gang."

"You're probably right."

"It doesn't matter much whether I'm right or wrong. Ransom is a crook and you can hold him in any case. Perhaps he'll blow on the rest of the Tigers when he finds himself in prison."

"What do you mean by Tigers?"

"I think that is what these conspirators call themselves. They had a strong organization, as you know.

"While I was in their headquarters at Balmain I heard the word Tiger used several times.

"I didn't catch on at first, but now as I think it over I'm convinced that they are all Tigers, and so when I collared Ransom I shouted that word for its effect on him, and also in the hope that some of his gang might be near by."

"I see."

"I didn't think that after the racket of this morning, when most of the crooks of Sydney were stirred up, one of the Tigers would be walking along on Adelaide Street. Of course I'm anxious to get sight of either Schruggs or his highness, and so I made a big racket on the bare chance that it might bring them from under cover somewhere, but I think I failed."

"It doesn't seem natural, Trim," said the captain, "to hear you speak of failure."

"Oh, well," Trim responded, quickly, "this is a failure in a detail only.

"I've heard Nick Carter say a good many times that nearly every success in detective work is made up of a handful of failures. I shall simply try again."

"That's right; but don't you suppose that even if Schruggs and this fellow called his highness had been near Ransom they would have been so disguised you could not have recognized them?"

"I think I can see through most disguises," Trim replied. "I'm satisfied they were not there."

"Well, then, what are you going to do?"

"I'm going to take a look at that house in Balmain."

"But the police have already been there!"

"I know it."

"Do you think you can discover things that my regular detectives could not find?"

The captain said this with a smile, but Trim saw that he was sensitive.

The young American did not wish to offend the captain, so he was careful in his response.

"You must remember," he said, "that I was in the house for a couple of hours and that I saw some things there that might lead me to look for points that your detectives would naturally miss."

"Well, then, go ahead. I suppose that's the most sensible thing for you to do."

Trim and the captain accordingly separated and the young fellow went at once to Balmain.

He knew that the police had been there and found the place deserted.

He had no idea that they had made a thorough search, and was quite confident that his own investigation would result in the discovery of a clew.

He first took a run through all the house, looking into rooms and closets and sounding the walls here and there.

The house generally looked like a residence that had been left while the family was away on a visit. There was no evidence of haste in leaving, no confusion anywhere.

In the basement Trim took particular note of the way the chimneys were located.

Having fixed in his mind just how they ran and where they should be in the floors above, he went to the main room, where he had had his interview with Schruggs and his highness. There he saw that a chimney apparently was missing.

On one side of the room was a fireplace. On another side, where there should have been a chimney there was simply a blank wall.

It was in this blank wall that his highness had disclosed a secret door which opened apparently upon a dark, deep well.

Trim sounded along that wall and satis-

fied himself that there was a hollow place at about the middle.

"That's where that door opens," he said to himself. "Now, if I'm right, I must be careful to open that door by the spring and not break it open."

His thought was that the conspirators had used that secret well and door as a means of escape.

It was only suspicion on his part, but he knew that intelligent crooks are generally very careful in the way they fix up such matters.

He feared that if he should burst in the wall at the spot where the secret door was he would ruin the mechanism so that his further progress would be obstructed.

Accordingly he began to search along the wall for the spring by which the secret door had been opened.

It was growing dark then, and inside the house it was too dark to see clearly. Accordingly he lighted a candle.

With this in his hand he approached the wall, when right on a level with his face he saw a spot upon the pattern of the wall paper that seemed suggestive.

He set down the candle and put his thumb hard upon that spot. Nothing happened, and for a moment he stood there wondering whether that spot might be placed there for the very purpose of deceiving an investigator.

He tried to see whether there were any other spots upon the wall paper near this that could conceal the spring.

"Sometimes," he said to himself, "they make a spot like that and then put their hand a certain number of inches to the right or left, as the case may be, to find the real spring."

He experimented on this line, touching the wall in various places without result.

At last, with some impatience, he stepped close to the wall and placed his thumb hard once more upon the spot he had first seen. Then, to his surprise and satisfaction, the panel door opened.

He at once realized a part of the secret that had escaped him before.

The spot on the wall covered the real spring, but it was so fixed that it would not work unless a similar spring in the floor were pressed.

The first time he touched the spot he had not happened to stand so that his feet pressed the floor spring. The second time both were pressed together, with the result that the wall opened.

"Now then," thought Trim, "I must go carefully."

He picked up his candle again and cautiously approached the open door.

Arrived at the edge, he stopped in amazement. Instead of the open well that he had seen when his highness opened the door, there was an ordinary floor such as would be seen in any closet.

Trim knelt down and pressed his hands upon it. It did not yield. Then he tried his whole weight upon it. It was apparently as solid as any other part of the floor.

He stepped back into the middle of the room and thoughtfully sat down in the chair from which he had watched his highness open and close the door.

Sitting in the chair, he could plainly see the floor within the opening.

"Now, then," he concluded, "there's a meaning in that, and I've got to find out what it is.

"When I looked in there before I could not see any floor. Now I can see one.

"I reckon that means that Schruggs and his highness are either concealed below that floor or have made their way from the house by means of a passage under it.

"The question is, would it do to smash that floor open with an ax or will it be better to work it by the secret spring, provided there is one?"

CHAPTER II.

A TURN IN THE PASSAGE.

Trim knelt upon the floor and moved his candle about from side to side, looking for any sign of a spring.

It struck him that as the spring that worked the panel door was so easily found, it would be probable that the arrangement for the trap would be quite as plain.

He found nothing on the floor that it seemed worth while to experiment with, but he found something else that interested him so much that he gave up his search for the secret spring to examine it.

It was a broken cuff button. The clasp had been torn away evidently by violence,

for the ornamental face was bruised and battered.

It was of very elegant make.

Trim took it to the front window of the room, hoping to get more light there by which to examine it closely.

He saw that there was a monogram engraved upon the face, and after a good deal of puzzling he made out that the letters were G. and H.

Which of the letters should come first in order he could not make out.

"G. H.," he said to himself, "or H. G. It'll surprise me a good deal if those are not the initials of his highness.

"Of all the men in this gang whom I have seen, there are only three who would be likely to wear such expensive jewelry as this.

"Those three are Schruggs, Ransom, and his highness.

"Now it'll be easy enough to find out at Captain Pemberton's office whether Schruggs or Ransom has ever traveled under false names that would fit these initials.

"It isn't at all probable that they have, for to begin with, any one who travels under a false name isn't likely to carry his disguise so far as to have special jewelry engraved to fit.

"I'm thinking, then, that this broken cuff button may prove to be a clew by which I can identify his highness, if I don't catch him in some other way.

"Captain Pemberton's men didn't find this because they didn't know of the existence of that closet.

"I'm more than ever convinced that the road to the hiding place where Schruggs and his highness have gone is through that closet."

With this thought Trim renewed his search for the secret spring.

Having examined the floor to his satisfaction, he raised the candle so as to light the walls one after another.

Upon the wall directly over the panel door he saw a short lever. It looked like the switch of a telegraph or telephone board.

He stood on tiptoe and was just able to touch it. Then he stepped back into the closet, held up the candle and stared at the switch, trying to make out whether it was connected with the panel door or whether it had something to do with the trap.

He recalled that both Schruggs and his highness were so much taller than himself that either one could have reached up and operated the lever without difficulty.

"There's only one way," the young fellow thought, "to find out about this, and that is to give the plaguy thing a yank."

Thereupon he set his candle down upon the floor of the closet, reached up his right hand and jumped a few inches into the air.

He grasped the little lever and found that it turned easily. It seemed to turn altogether too easily, in fact, for as he came down and let go of it it whirled around several times with a loud rattling noise as if chains were running over a windlass. At the same instant the panel door swung to with a bang.

Trim was in sudden darkness.

It must be understood that this happened in that flash of a second while he was in the course of jumping up and coming down—that is, before he had reached the level of the floor.

When the lever had whirled the panel door had slammed to and the candle had gone out; and when Trim came down he did not land as he had expected to. Instead he had begun to shoot downward, and it flashed across his mind that the lever had not only worked the panel door, but had lowered the trap also, and that he was now descending into the well that his highness had spoken of as the death chamber for traitors.

Of course his first impulse was to reach out his hands in the hope of clutching something.

His fingers scraped down the smooth surface of the panel door and finally brought up against the edge of the floor against which the trap had rested.

He dug his nails into this and stiffened his muscles with all his might.

The force of his fall gave his arms a severe wrench, but he managed to hold on nevertheless, and for an instant he hung there in the darkness, his feet dangling below him, his whole weight supported by his finger ends.

Trim drew a long breath.

"This train won't stop long at this

station," he said to himself, with grim humor, "for it is more than I can do to hang on very long. I wonder how far away the next stopping place is?"

He kicked his feet out in every direction, hoping to find a support for them.

In front there was nothing, and at the sides he could feel simply the bare walls of the well. Back of him, however, his feet came against a shelf or projection of some kind, and against this he immediately rested his weight, so that it was somewhat easier to keep himself from falling further.

Even then it was not a pleasant situation. He still had to cling to the floor edge and his feet were resting on something, he could not tell what, at least a yard behind him.

The candle had been blown out by the current of air caused by the sudden falling of the trap.

Trim had plenty of matches in his pockets, as well as a small dark lantern that he had bought since his return from the interior.

It was not so perfect a lantern as the kind used by his father, Nick Carter, and Patsy, but it was the best that the market afforded.

He might just as well have been without it at that moment, for it was impossible to let go his hold and reach for either match or lantern.

"This is just a little bit of an improvement," thought the boy, "for it gives me time to think and breathe.

"Now let's see if we can make out what this thing is.

"I started in here on the theory that this well is a means of escape for Schruggs and his highness. If that is true, it must follow that there are steps or a ladder of some kind by which to go down.

"I can understand one thing, and that is that either Schruggs or his highness in working that lever could stand inside the room and reach up to it, so that when the trap fell they wouldn't come down with it.

"After that it must have been possible for them to step somewhere and so get down without falling; unless it be that the bottom of the well isn't far away, in which case they could let themselves down by their hands and drop.

"Now I don't think they'd go that way. I don't think that either Schruggs or his highness is the kind of a fellow to take a drop when he might just as well have steps.

"Therefore I'm obliged to believe that my feet are now resting on one of those steps.

"If there is one there must be others, and if I could get my hands on them I should be all right. That's what I shall have to try for."

His body was stretched out almost straight.

Having made up his mind to the desperate attempt that he must make, he lowered his head as far below his shoulders as it would go, then threw it up suddenly, pushed with his hands and let go, bringing every muscle in his body into play in order to make his rise as far as possible from the edge of the floor.

At the same time he kicked out as well as he could from the spot upon which his feet rested.

This movement in the dark was followed by a trick that only a well-trained athlete like Trim could attempt.

He whirled completely around in the air and threw his hands out in the opposite direction.

Of course he began to fall at once, but his movements were so quick that before he had any sort of headway his hands had caught an edge upon the opposite side of the well, similar to that upon which his feet had been resting.

It was not easy to cling to it, but it was easier than it had been to cling to the edge of the floor, and besides, there was the advantage that his feet were resting upon a similar edge.

He could feel against his body several projections, and yet it did not seem as if he were either upon a ladder or upon a flight of steps.

Nevertheless it was possible to climb straight up or down by these strange steps, and accordingly he began to descend.

It proved that he had not far to go.

Letting himself down past one after another of these projections, he at length came to the bottom.

Then he produced his lamp, lighted it and threw its rays upward.

He saw that he had been descending the back side of a flight of steps.

These steps were so arranged that if they had been leaned over to the side of the wall upon which was the panel door, they would have made a safe though rather steep descent from that point.

It looked as if the mechanism had been so arranged that with the working of the lever in the violent way that Trim had worked it the steps would be thrown forward, thus leaving a perfectly empty well down which a body would fall unobstructed.

Trim had escaped that fate, first, by catching on to the edge of the floor, and, second, by his risky but successful whirling in the air and so catching upon the back edges of the steps.

"Well," thought Trim, "these fellows have rigged up a very clever scheme, and if it hadn't been for good luck I should probably have been dead now right here where I'm standing."

He directed the rays of the lamp then at the floor and around him, and saw that a passage led from the spot in a direction that appeared to be toward the street upon which the house was situated. It inclined slightly downward.

The rays of Trim's lamp showed him the bare walls of this passage, which was just high enough for an ordinary man to stand in erect, for a distance of two or three rods. Then all was dense darkness.

After a moment's thought Trim put out the lamp and started down the passage in the dark.

His reason for this was a suspicion that his foes might be in hiding somewhere below and that they might be warned of his approach by the rays of light.

Of course there was danger that he might step into a pitfall at any point, but he chose to take this risk rather than the other.

He proceeded very slowly, testing each step before he took it and keeping one hand upon the wall at his side.

After he had gone about fifty paces he felt the ground beneath his feet level, and at the same moment his hand came to the end of the wall.

It seemed to end in nothing, and he therefore concluded that he had reached a turning in the passage.

He was tempted to relight his lamp, but decided not to do so until he had made a little investigation in the darkness.

Reaching out with his other hand, he felt the end of the other wall.

It was clear, therefore, that the passage down which he had just come ended in another passage running at a right angle to it.

Trim stepped cautiously forward a couple of paces and came up against another wall.

This was proof that his judgment was correct up to this point, and the question now was, should he turn to the right or to the left?

The new passage seemed to be rather wider than the one that led from the house, but it was exactly like it in other respects as far as Trim could discover in the darkness.

"It won't do," he reflected, "to strike a match here, for the passage may be perfectly straight in both directions and the flame of a match could be seen a long way off.

"Shall I go to the right or to the left?"

CHAPTER III.

TRIM IN A TRAP.

Trim stood still for a moment debating the puzzling question.

He tried to make up his mind which way the passages went, whether north or south or otherwise.

So far as he could tell, the passage that led from the house had run in nearly a straight line, and according to that, it seemed to him that the passage to which he had now come must run very nearly north and south.

South would be toward the bay.

With the thought that possibly the scoundrels might have prepared some way of escape by water, he started along the passage toward the south.

He remembered the steamer that had been cruising in the harbor at the time of the great attempt at jail breaking for the purpose evidently of taking the escaped convicts on board.*

* See "Trim on the Safety Valve," No. 7 of the NEW NICK CARTER LIBRARY.

That steamer had sailed away and escaped capture, but why should there not be another one?

Quite convinced that this direction would take him along the track followed by the convicts, Trim proceeded rapidly, though still with great caution.

He had gone but a few paces, when he became aware that he was going up grade. This seemed to him to be a proof that he had chosen the right direction.

"This passage," he thought, "is leading toward the surface, and the exit will probably be found to be underneath a dock or somewhere else near the shore."

Occasionally the boy stopped to listen. He heard no sounds that came from within the passage, but he was quite certain that a muffled roaring far ahead of him must be the sound of waves upon the coast. This sound never became loud, but it was more distinct the further he advanced.

The grade rose steadily, though it was never steep.

After a time Trim felt that the ground under his feet was different than it had been before.

He stooped and felt of it with his fingers. What he felt was very moist mud.

He hardly knew what to think of this, but concluded that he must be now near the exit of the passage.

He pressed on with still more caution.

The next thing to cause him to pause was something directly in his way.

He had been proceeding with one hand along the wall as before, and he was stopped by coming plump up against another wall.

"Perhaps this is another bend in the passage," he thought.

He put both hands upon the wall that was now in front of him and edged his way across the passage.

The wall was damp, so damp that it dripped water.

Three paces taken sideways brought him to the other side of the passage; then he realized that he had come to the end of it.

There seemed to be nothing like a door there, and he suspected that the means of getting out was somewhere in the roof.

It was impossible to find out whether this was the case without a light, and after a good deal of feeling around Trim decided to risk striking a match.

He did so, holding the little flame in front of him so that its gleam could not be seen down the passage.

He saw that he was indeed at the end of the passage and that there was no possible way of getting out through the top.

In front of him the dripping wall proved to be made of wood.

It was so slimy and water soaked that he had not noticed that it differed from the wall which he had been feeling all the way along.

As his match flickered and went out at last, it occurred to him that the muffled roaring was louder here than it had been anywhere else.

"It would be strange," he thought, "if this passage ended directly in the sea itself."

However that might be, one thing was certain: he had taken the wrong direction at the turn in the passage. The convicts never could have come out this way, and it was necessary for him now to turn back and see to what the passage might lead in the northerly direction; so back he went.

In order to make sure that he should not go astray if there should prove to be other passages leading out from this main tunnel, he returned along the same side by which he had come.

Proceeding thus in absolute darkness, it was impossible to estimate the distance of his journey.

He had a vague notion that he must have gone at least a quarter of a mile from the first turn in the passage before he came to its end.

It might have been more or less; certainly the house used by his highness and the others for a headquarters was not much more than a quarter of a mile from the sea line.

The distance really was not important, whatever it might be, but he could not help wondering about the length of the tunnel and whether it extended as far toward the north as it did toward the south.

He remembered that somewhat to the north of the house there was a low hill. He had not been beyond it and did not

know, therefore, what was on the other side.

If he was correct in his judgment about the points of the compass, this tunnel would lead him directly under that hill.

Thoughts of this kind were running through his head as he cautiously retraced his steps.

Suddenly he heard a noise that must have come from within the passage itself. He halted abruptly and listened.

There could be no mistake about it; what he heard was the sound of hurrying footsteps.

Whoever it was was proceeding cautiously, but with all possible speed.

Trim felt for his revolver, but his hand had no sooner touched the butt than he let it fall again. The sound was dying away.

"The rat isn't coming in this direction," he thought, and he was disappointed.

He felt that nothing would have pleased him better just then than to have an encounter with one of the Tigers in this underground passage.

The instant that he realized that the footsteps were retreating instead of coming his way he started forward.

He went more rapidly than before, but he still took pains to walk lightly.

He had gone but a few paces, when again the hand with which he felt the wall reached out into empty space.

He knew, therefore, that he had come again to the side passage that led up to the house.

From this fact he reasoned that the footsteps he had heard must have come down through this side passage from the house and then made the turning to the north.

"Those steps sounded," thought Trim, "just as if the fellow knew his ground. In any case I've got to follow him up."

So he pushed on without pausing.

He thought it possible that he might be able to overtake the man ahead of him, but he doubted whether this would be the wisest course.

He was after more than one prisoner, and it might be that if he could only keep within hearing distance of the man in front of him he would finally be led to the hiding place of all the rest; so he went on at a moderate pace, halting occasionally to make sure that he still heard the sound of steps before him.

They became very faint at last, as if the man ahead were exercising more caution.

Finally they ceased altogether, and it was about this time that Trim realized that the grade instead of descending was now rising again.

It was rather steep, too, and he reasoned that before long he would come to another end of the passage, and that this time there would be a door or other means of exit there.

The fact that the sound of retreating steps had stopped might mean that the man in front had halted.

"Perhaps," thought Trim, "he has heard me in spite of the pains I've taken to go softly, and is waiting somewhere ahead to do me up before I know where he is.

"Perhaps I'd better change my tactics, though I can't see what else to do."

He moved slowly forward at this, waving one hand in front of him in order that he might feel anybody who should be in his way.

He was prepared for instant action, and if he had met anybody in that black hole there would have been a terrific struggle.

Perhaps that would have been better than what did happen.

Trim had scarcely begun to move forward, with his arm out as a guard against danger, when he heard a clicking noise and a grating as if a door were swung on rusty hinges.

He halted again, listening intently and watching anxiously for any sign of light.

It seemed as if he did see an instant of comparative lightness in the gloom ahead, but that may have been imagination.

The eyes strained in total darkness often appear to see things that are not there.

Nothing could have been more certain, however, than that somebody was in the passage ahead of him, and it was a million chances to one that that somebody was one of the foes whom he was seeking.

If he had rushed forward at that moment there might have been an end to his investigations on the spot, and it might have been a successful one, but Trim did not rush forward.

It seemed to him that the time was not ripe for such action.

Whether he made a mistake or not may be judged by those who study his operations and methods.

The fact is that he stood perfectly still until there was another sound of creaking followed by a clicking noise; then everything in the passage was deathly still as before.

"I reckon that means," said Trim to himself, "that the fellow ahead has got out through a door. Now I'll find where that door is and then see what's to be done."

Again he started forward, and at the instant he heard a laugh.

It came to him in muffled tones, and he was certain that it was ahead and somewhat above him.

The laugh was followed by the rumbling of a deep voice uttering words that Trim could not distinguish.

After that there was a moment of silence, and then the dull sounds of voices began again. Meantime Trim was making his way forward more rapidly than before.

Presently his knee came against something which proved to be a flight of steps.

He felt around with his hands and found that he was at the end of the passage.

The steps were very short, for at that spot the passage was hardly higher than his own head.

Standing partly up the steps, Trim could feel a heavy trapdoor above him, and at one point near the edge of the wall his fingers detected the presence of iron fastenings.

By persistent feeling about these fastenings he discovered at last what was undoubtedly a keyhole.

As soon as he came to the steps he could hear the voices above him distinctly, and he promptly recognized them as those of Schruggs and his highness.

The first words that he distinguished were spoken by Schruggs.

"Well, now that your highness has had his laugh, perhaps you'll let me know what there is in the situation that should make a Tiger cheerful."

"My dear fellow," was the response of his highness, uttered in a mocking tone, "you're no kind of a Tiger if you can't be cheerful under all circumstances."

"It's very well for your highness to feel cheerful," said Schruggs, "for it is still possible for you to go out into the world and escape suspicion, but for me——"

The rest of Schruggs' speech was probably a shrug of the shoulders.

His highness said:

"So you think you're sure to be caught?"

"I don't see any escape for it."

"Haven't you confidence in me?"

Schruggs made no reply to this, and his highness reiterated the question sharply.

"Haven't you any confidence in me? Answer me!"

"Well," replied Schruggs, "and as man to man for this once I suppose I've your leave to speak freely?"

"My dear fellow," exclaimed his highness, pleasantly, "speak as freely as you wish. I shall take no offense."

"Well, then, it's just this: I did have a great deal of confidence in you, for there's no question that you've more brains than all the crooks in Sydney.

"You got up such an organization as was never known here, and you fixed up schemes for plunder that were better than I ever dreamed of."

"Didn't I carry them out well?" interrupted his highness.

"Yes, but listen. You carried them out well because you were dealing with men inferior to yourself in talent."

"I suppose that's true."

"Now, then, you planned a most tremendous scheme in which we all entered heartily.

"You wanted to free the convicts in the jail, get rid of Pemberton, Hawkins and Deever, and clear out with the whole gang to an uninhabited island in the South Seas where we could have our own government and do as we pleased."

"Glorious scheme!" remarked his highness, softly.

"Yes, it was a great scheme, and you were undoubtedly in earnest, for you yourself undertook to throw the bomb into the prison which gave the signal for the rising against the keepers."

"Yes, I threw the bomb. You've

speaking anything that is offensive as yet," muttered his highness.

"Well, I'm coming to that," exclaimed Schruggs, rather impatiently.

"You asked me if I hadn't any confidence in you, and I tell you my confidence is considerably shaken; and why shouldn't it be? Your scheme has entirely failed, most of our men——"

"You mean Tigers."

"Excuse me—yes, Tigers. Most of them have been captured and you and I are fugitives."

"I am obliged to admit all that," said his highness, "but I should think that you would feel that the man who could plan such a scheme and carry it so near to execution would be able to make things safe for you.

"Don't you think that this tunnel from headquarters, the extent of which you never dreamed of, is a pretty fair invention?"

"Yes; but what does it lead to? Where are we now? What are we going to do? Where shall we go? How shall I, whose picture is in the Rogues' Gallery, go to avoid arrest?

"The trouble is, your highness, that with all your clever planning you have met your equal, and, pardon me, perhaps your superior."

This was followed by a short interval of silence, after which his highness said, slowly:

"Perhaps I have. I suppose you refer to the young American detective who got on to our organization by getting the best of you?"

"Well, Carter did get the best of me," admitted Schruggs, "and I'm not ashamed to own it, for he's a smart fellow and comes of a family famous for dealing with such people as you and me.

"He has not only prevented me from doing up Hawkins, Deever and Pemberton, but he is himself still at large, and one may be certain that he will run us both to earth before he stops."

His highness laughed gleefully.

"You think so?" he cried.

"Well, then, let me tell you, Schruggs, something that will cheer your heart. You remember how we came to this place, don't you?"

"Yes. I'm not likely to forget that."

"Well, let me recall one or two points.

"We didn't take to the tunnel until we were certain that the plan for the capture of the steamer with Deever and Pemberton on board had failed.

"It became certain that you and I had got to run for it. We worked the panel door in our house, went down the steps and got to the bottom of the well, didn't we?"

"We did."

"Then do you remember that I stopped and did something?"

"Yes."

"What I did was to fix the steps so that they leaned away from the top of the well, and then I pulled down the trap that would make the closet seem like an ordinary one."

"What was that for?"

"It was to serve as a bait for any clever detective, American or otherwise, who should try to investigate that well.

"I made up my mind that young Carter would come to the house, and felt certain that as he had once seen the panel door open he would try to get it open again.

"I believed that he would have his curiosity so much aroused by the discovery of a solid floor where formerly he had seen an empty well that he would somehow force that floor open.

"I believed he would see the lever at the top of the door that worked the trap. I rather hoped that he would pull that lever, fall down the well, and smash his brains out. He didn't do just that."

"What do you mean?" cried Schruggs in great excitement. "Has young Carter gone to the house?"

"Yes. That was what I ran back to find out."

"Great heavens!" cried Schruggs. "You don't mean to say that Carter got that trap open and didn't fall down?"

"I do mean to say exactly that. Somehow or other, the shrewd fellow managed to save his life at that point."

"Then we are lost!"

"Oh, no, we're not."

"How so?"

"Why, Carter is in the tunnel at this minute, undoubtedly."

Schruggs groaned.

"Now see here," cried his highness,

sharply, "you're showing the white feather in a way that doesn't please me at all.

"I believe you would give me away if you thought you could do so and so secure your own safety."

"Oh, no! no!" Schruggs protested; "that isn't it. But I thoroughly believe that young fellow will——"

"He will drown like a rat in ten minutes," interrupted his highness.

"What do you mean by that?"

"Why, just this. The fact that I have been back through the tunnel clear to the house and found the trap open and yet have not seen or heard young Carter, proves that he got into the passage, and when he came to the turn that he took the course to the south instead of to the north.

"I calculated that he would do just that. Just where he is at this minute I don't pretend to say, but that he is somewhere in the tunnel is as sure as sunrise.

"He certainly followed the tunnel up to the end at the south. When he got there he probably made his way back, and may be now exploring this end of the tunnel.

"Don't get so frightened, Schruggs. You make me tired. Do you see this lever?"

"Yes, and I wonder what it's for."

"I've only to pull it and it will open the gate at the other end of the tunnel at high tide. That gate is under water.

"The tide is almost at its height now. One pull at that lever and the entire tunnel from one end to the other will be flooded."

CHAPTER IV.

THE FLOOD DOES ITS NATURAL WORK.

It hardly needs to be said that Trim listened to this conversation with intense eagerness.

It seemed to him perfectly clear that only two men—that is, Schruggs and his highness—had taken advantage of the tunnel as a means of escape.

Here they both were within a few feet of him, and he racked his brains for some device by which he could capture them at once.

He could see no way to do this. Young as he was, he knew too much to take a leap absolutely in the dark.

It would be impossible to get his hands on either of these men without making his presence known, and that would give them both time to escape, as well as an opportunity to murder him while he was comparatively helpless in the tunnel below them.

He listened in vain for any word that would give him a clew to the real name of his highness.

His quick mind foresaw that his highness would certainly leave this place and walk about unsuspected.

"I'm the only one," thought Trim, "who has seen the rascal, and I'm therefore the only one who can identify him.

"A man who is as clever as he is may have been able to disguise himself so that when I did see him he looked very much different from what he will hereafter.

"He is a man whose real name must be known to many persons in Sydney; quite likely he stands high in society.

"It is therefore necessary that I should know his real name in order to chase him up when I get out of his.

"Schruggs is so well known that it will be a comparatively easy matter to get hold of him any time, but as for that, I wouldn't give a pinch of salt to capture Schruggs without taking his highness too.

"That mysterious man has been the brains of the Tigers, and if he isn't shut up there'll be no end to his rascalities.

"If I only knew what sort of a place it is that they're in now, or even where this is, I might manage to think of some way to capture them on the spot. As it is, I don't see but what they've got the best of me for the present."

These thoughts were in the boy's mind during the conversation.

It was with a thrill of horror that he heard the last remark of his highness and realized that there was another problem confronting him now.

It was not merely a question as to whether he should capture these two criminals, but whether he should be able to get out of the trap he was in with his life.

There could be no doubt that his highness meant what he said. It wasn't likely that he would speak of being able

to let the sea into this tunnel unless he was confident it could be done.

Trim remembered how the tunnel inclined downward from the sea end to about the middle of its length.

"That means," he thought, "that once the gate is opened the water will rush in at a fearful rate, and there won't be any time at all to get out, even if there was a way to do so."

This understanding of his perilous position was justified immediately by the brief conversation that followed.

"It's a wonderful plan, your highness," Schruggs said, "but if the water rushes in so as to flood the whole tunnel, won't it burst open the trap in this floor and flood this chamber also?"

"No, no," his highness responded, quickly. "The bottom of this floor is exactly on the sea level.

"The water therefore will rise just as far as this floor and no further. As I said, it will completely flood the tunnel in less than a minute after the lever is pulled.

"The case is absolutely hopeless for anybody who is so unlucky as to be down there at the time. We two here are perfectly safe."

"It's hard to believe it," Schruggs responded, with a trembling voice. "If you think the young detective is down there now, why don't you pull the lever?"

"Oh, there's no hurry," was the response. "He is prowling about in the dark there now, and I wouldn't object if he had time to get clear to this end before I let the flood come in."

"It makes me horribly nervous," said Schruggs, "to think that he might be at this minute underneath there and listening to what we are saying."

His highness laughed.

"It would please me immensely if that were the case," he said.

"But don't you see what risks you're taking?"

There was a moment of silence, and then a sound of steps crossing a floor.

After this Trim heard the voice of his highness speaking in cool, measured tones.

"I can see, Schruggs," he said, "that I've been taking a great many risks, and from this minute I'm done with them.

"It is clear that I've been taking risks with you, for it was your carelessness that allowed this detective to get on our track, and it is now your cowardice that makes it risky for you and me to appear in the world again."

"What do you mean?" Schruggs interrupted, evidently in a tone of great alarm.

"This!"

There was a sound of a pistol shot and a heavy body falling to the floor, mingled with tones of pain.

"It is just this, Schruggs," resumed his highness, still speaking coldly and calmly, "you're so rattled by your fears that it won't do for you to escape.

"I don't intend that there shall be any witnesses against me when I leave this place.

"If you had shown decent nerve I should have let you out with me. As it is, your chance is gone.

"I am now going to pull the lever that will let the sea into the tunnel. I should think from the looks of you that you have about two minutes to live; the detective down there in the dark has less, so good-by to you!"

At the end of this speech there was a loud creaking noise, which evidently meant that his highness had pulled the lever of which he spoke.

Schruggs cried out in frantic fear and agony:

"For Heaven's sake, don't leave me!

"I never would give you away!

"Oh, what pain I am in!

"I cannot die here!

"Don't leave me——"

There was a sound of a banged door and a mocking laugh, and Trim knew that his highness had taken his departure.

He knew, too, that a great crisis had come for himself. But a second after the noise of the working lever he heard a roaring and a hissing far down the tunnel, and there was no mistaking what it meant.

The sea was coming in!

He had not the slightest doubt that the cold-blooded villain who had organized the Tigers and who had engineered the most diabolical of crimes had planned this tunnel in such a way that it certainly would be flooded from end to end.

A wild thought had entered Trim's head just before the pistol shot that announced the murder of Schruggs.

"Why shouldn't he run back up the tunnel to the passage that led to the Balmain house and so escape?"

He had abandoned this thought the moment it came to him for two reasons. In the first place, it was not at all probable that he could get to the house ahead of the inrushing water.

In the second place, and that was more important, it was not possible for him to run away.

His duty was here where danger was, and here he would fight it out even if his life should be lost in the effort.

With the sound of the incoming water there came to Trim a tremendous determination to escape.

"Schruggs opened this trap for his highness," Trim said to himself, "a few minutes ago. If he could stir, I believe I could frighten him into opening it for me. But there is no use of thinking that, for he is undoubtedly mortally wounded."

Thinking thus, he went higher and higher up the steps until he was stooping beneath the trap; then with his back against the trap he exerted all his force to raise it.

It would not budge! The iron lock was too much for him.

The roaring of the coming water grew louder and louder! It was fairly deafening, and as it came he felt the air stirring about him.

Above he could hear the groans of the dying Schruggs. Whatever he could do must be done at once, and Trim was losing no time.

He placed the barrel of his revolver at the keyhole of the trapdoor lock and fired into it.

The sound of the shot could hardly be heard above the crashing of the coming flood.

Immediately after the shot Trim tried again to raise the door. It seemed to him that it yielded a little bit, but there was still no getting it up.

Again he fired into the lock. The violent rebound of the weapon showed him that the ball had struck the iron at the very mouth of the barrel.

His hand was numbed with pain, but with grim determination he held the weapon against the lock and fired repeatedly until every chamber of the revolver had been emptied.

His ears began to ring strangely, and it seemed as if the blood would burst forth from the pores of his skin. He did not understand at this instant what this meant.

It was the fact that the rushing water filling the tunnel full was compressing the air at the southern end so that it was becoming too dense to breathe.

Just as he fired his last shot into the lock he felt the water rising about his feet. He wondered vaguely why it did not ingulf him at once.

This again he understood later. The pressure of the air was holding the flood back.

Again he strained with his back against the trap to raise it.

The roaring of the water had diminished, and now he heard the frantic shrieking of Schruggs in a chamber above.

"If I had one more shot," thought Trim, "I believe I could burst that lock to pieces."

The water was rising higher and now his knees were wet with it.

There was almost a sense of despair in the boy's heart as he hastily slipped the empty cartridges from his revolver and began to reload the weapon.

He was still standing with his back against the trap and straining with all his might to raise it as he reloaded the weapon.

His brain whirled and perspiration started from every pore in his body.

Of a sudden there was a great crash and a sound like the report of a cannon. With it the trapdoor flew upward and Trim leaped and was half blown into the chamber above.

The pressure of the mighty flood against the compressed air in the tunnel had done the work that a dozen giants would have failed to do.

It had burst the iron fastenings of the trap and thus opened the way for the daring young detective to escape.

With the release of the pressure against the door the water leaped forward again.

and came up into the chamber as if it were a mighty fountain.

With one glance as he came up through the floor Trim saw Schruggs lying huddled in a corner of an almost unfurnished room.

A candle was burning in a socket set against the wall. It burned but an instant after the rushing air entered the room. That instant was enough to reveal the situation to Trim.

"God help me!" shrieked Schruggs in added terror as he saw the young detective bounding up from the tunnel.

In the same glance in which he saw the wounded criminal Trim also saw the door in the wall through which his highness had gone.

The water was pouring into the room with such force that it seemed evident that it also would be flooded in another second.

Trim bounded across the floor, caught Schruggs up in his arms, and made for the door.

It was locked!

He had managed to get one fresh cartridge in his revolver. This he fired instantly into the lock, and as it was an ordinary contrivance it was shattered by the shock.

It was then the work of but an instant to hurl the door open, half drag and half carry Schruggs through it and up a flight of stairs, where he came to a room that was dimly lighted from outside.

The light came through a small window set near the top of the wall.

Trim saw that he was in an ordinary cellar.

He laid Schruggs groaning upon the floor and looked back down the stairway up which he had just come. All was dark below, but he heard the hissing and blowing of the tide. He wondered whether it would rise higher yet.

He recalled the statement of his highness that the level of the underground chamber was exactly on the level of the sea.

"His highness was probably right," thought Trim. "Under ordinary circumstances the water would not rise higher than the bottom of that floor. It was forced up because of being held back by the pressure of the air, and now that that pressure is removed the flood will probably go down again."

He had not been wet as high as his waist and the matches in his vest pocket were therefore dry.

He struck one and descended the steps a little way. By its light he could see that his judgment was correct. The water was already beginning to flow back.

The tunnel was flooded from end to end just as his highness had planned that it should be, but the cold-blooded rascal had forgotten that the water would condense the air ahead of it and thus blow open the trapdoor.

Perhaps his highness had thought of that, but had not supposed that the victim of his villainous scheme would be where he could take advantage of that fact when the crisis came. Trim breathed easier.

"It's all right now," he said to himself. "His highness has skipped, believing that both Schruggs and I are dead. I shan't have to hurry away from here."

This was a very satisfactory thought, for if the situation had been such as to compel him to leave the cellar at once, he might thus have exposed himself to his highness, who for all he knew might be on the watch somewhere in the vicinity.

CHAPTER V.

SCHRUGGS DEPARTS.

Trim returned to the cellar and, finding an empty barrel set it on end, stood upon it and looked through the one narrow window.

It was after sunset and the light outside was almost as dim as that within.

He could see clearly enough to observe that he was looking out upon an unoccupied hillside. The ground sloped away in front of him for perhaps a hundred yards. Then there were trees, and in the gloom he could distinguish beyond them the outlines of a higher hill.

There was no house or light in sight.

"I think I understand this," he reflected. "The tunnel was dug straight through the hill which lay to the north of the Tigers' headquarters, so that it ends on the farther side of that hill.

"This is quite likely the most northern house in Balmain. The next thing to do will be to find whether it is occupied."

He was so anxious to proceed with his

pursuit of his highness that for the moment he had forgotten all about Schruggs. A groan from the wounded man reminded him as he stepped down from the barrel.

"Well, my friend," said Trim, "you seem to be badly hurt, but you've the satisfaction of knowing you're not going to be drowned."

"Lord help me!" groaned Schruggs. "I think I'm done for!"

"Perhaps not," Trim responded. "We'll see."

He lighted his dark lantern and set it so that its rays would fall upon the criminal. Then Trim knelt beside him and examined his wound.

He saw at a glance that it was of a fatal nature. There was no possibility of saving the ex-convict's life, and even with the best medical attention it could not be prolonged more than a few minutes.

"It's all up with me!" muttered Schruggs.

"I'm afraid it is," returned Trim.

Schruggs groaned and stared in a terrified way at Trim.

"You must be a perfect demon," he said, faintly, "to have escaped him."

"I'll have him hanged on your account yet," Trim responded.

Schruggs shook his head.

"No," he answered. "You won't be able to get him."

"Yes, I shall, and you'd like to have me, too."

Schruggs looked at Trim without replying.

"Come, my man," said the boy, seriously. "You are in a bad scrape. It would be impossible to get either priest or doctor here in time to help you.

"You'd better do the best you can to make up for your crimes by telling me all you know of the man who shot you."

"I don't dare to," was the response.

"Don't dare to!" exclaimed Trim. "Why, it was only a short time ago I heard you say that you were afraid of me."

"Yes, I was and am."

"You've nothing to fear from me and you're not in any shape to be afraid of him.

"No man can do you an injury now. Come, speak up and tell me who he is!"

"I might recover," groaned Schruggs, very slowly; "and if I did and he knew that I peached——"

"He shall never know!" urged Trim. "There isn't any doubt that the police will protect you if you'll only give a clew to his identity.

"Come, now, what is his name?"

Schruggs only stared for reply. His mind was evidently fighting with a multitude of terrors.

"I know more of his name than you think," urged Trim, and at a guess he added the initials H. G.

Schruggs' eyes were growing glassy. A strange light came into them for just a second as Trim mentioned these letters, and the young detective wondered whether he had hit the mark.

"H. G.," repeated Trim, eagerly. "Tell me, what do they stand for?"

Schruggs opened his lips, evidently made a great effort to speak, half rose upon his elbow, and then sunk back speechless for evermore.

Trim knelt beside the body for several minutes. At last he arose, feeling depressed and gloomy. It was a terrible thing to see a man die thus.

"He has gone!" Trim reflected, "with all the worst secrets of his crimes with him."

It was now quite dark outside, and there was no reason why he should remain longer in this cellar.

He accordingly composed Schruggs' remains decently and then went upstairs into the house. He found that it was wholly empty. There was not even a scrap of furniture in the place.

As he roamed about the rooms a hopeful thought occurred to him.

"It ought to be easy," his thought ran, "to find out who owns or leases this place. That should be a clew."

There was nothing in the house to indicate that it ever had been occupied, and as he looked out from one and another window he saw that there were no houses near by in any direction.

At a considerable distance, it is true, there was a twinkle of lights from several windows, but the houses from which

they came were too far to be considered as in the neighborhood.

Trim thought how it might be possible that his highness was still lurking somewhere near to see whether his victim had managed to escape from the terrible trap prepared for him.

He therefore disguised himself completely before he left the house.

As he found all doors locked from without he made his way out through a window.

Then he betook himself to Balmain, which proved to be a short distance away over the brow of the hill.

He met nobody who appeared to take the slightest interest in him, and was therefore convinced that his highness, having left the house after murdering Schruggs, had gone immediately away from the neighborhood.

Trim went to the headquarters of the Tigers.

The house appeared as before.

He still had the key with him, and more for curiosity than anything else he unlocked the door and went in.

The front room was as he had first seen it.

He found another candle, lighted it and then pressed the secret springs that worked the panel door.

It flew open readily, revealing this time the dark well.

He looked down and held his candle out over the opening. About fifteen feet below him he saw the reflection of his light in water. That showed that the tunnel had been flooded as completely as the villain who constructed it could have wished.

There was nothing about the place to indicate whether his highness had returned there after opening the floodgate.

After making a sufficient inspection of the house to satisfy himself on this point, Trim closed the panel door and went away.

He then began a series of inquiries among the real-estate agents which it is unnecessary to describe in detail.

He asked his questions with caution in order that no one might suspect the real object of his inquiry.

The result of it was that about nine o'clock in the evening he learned that the house over the brow of the hill where he had left the dead body of Schruggs belonged to a certain Mr. Jackson, and that it had been leased for a term of five years many months before.

The man who had taken the lease was known as J. A. Brown.

The agent who had managed the transaction said to Trim:

"Mr. Brown was a stranger to me, and admitted that he had no acquaintances in Sydney or its vicinity, so he could not give me any references, you understand.

"For that reason I required him to pay a considerable sum in the way of advance rent.

"He was willing to do this, and planked down enough money to cover the rent for two years. Since then I haven't heard from him.

"He said that he was going to take a long journey and might not occupy the house within a year.

"As the rent was paid I didn't concern myself with whether he occupied the house or not."

"The name of Brown," thought Trim, "doesn't help me very much. However, we'll see if it was the same man who leased the house occupied by the Tigers as a headquarters."

It was too late then to follow up this line of inquiry, and Trim accordingly let it rest until the morning.

Before going to his hotel he called at Pemberton's office to notify him of the death of Schruggs.

The captain had gone home and Trim did not care to explain his business to a subordinate.

It did not seem right to leave the body unheard for throughout the night, and so he set out to wake up the captain.

When he arrived at Pemberton's house he found that that official was away attending to some business in a distant part of the city.

Trim followed him there, only to find that he had just left for his home. Back he went to the captain's house, where he learned that Pemberton had not yet returned.

There was a telephone in the house, of course, and Trim asked permission to use it.

He rang up the captain's office and found that Pemberton was there.

Trim asked him to remain in the office until he should call.

So it came about that it was considerably after midnight before Trim managed to find the captain and make his report.

It need hardly be said that Pemberton was intensely interested.

He not only complimented Trim upon his shrewdness and courage, but he approved his judgment in every particular.

"There's no doubt," he said, "that before we rest to-night we should have Schruggs' body attended to.

"I'll look after it myself, as I'm curious to see the end of that remarkable tunnel."

"I'll go with you if you like," said Trim.

"Don't you think you'd better go to sleep instead?"

"No. There'll be time enough for sleep later."

Pemberton was only too willing to have the young fellow go along with him.

Accordingly they hunted up a deputy coroner, and accompanied by two ordinary policemen they crossed the ferry to Balmain.

Before leaving his office the captain had telephoned to an undertaker to have a wagon in readiness to carry the body of the dead criminal to the morgue.

This wagon was waiting for the party at the Balmain ferry.

Trim and Pemberton engaged a cab there and drove at once to the house on the outskirts of the village where the body of Schruggs had been left.

The deputy coroner and policemen came after them in the undertaker's wagon.

"So this is the place, hey?" remarked Pemberton as they alighted in front of the house.

"Yes," Trim responded; "and to save time we might as well go in through the window by which I came out, for all the doors are locked."

He accordingly led the way around the corner of the house and then stopped abruptly.

"What's the matter?" exclaimed Pemberton, who was close at his heels.

"I left that window open," Trim responded.

"It might have fallen down," said the captain.

"Perhaps."

Trim put his hands upon the sash and tried to raise it.

"If this window fell down," he remarked, dryly, "it could not have locked itself, for it isn't that kind of a lock."

The captain also tried to raise the sash.

"It's locked, sure enough," he replied. "What does it mean?"

Trim said nothing, but went around to the front door and tried it.

That also was locked. So also were the two other doors at the side and back of the house respectively.

"I think you must be mistaken," Pemberton said, "about that window fastening. It is probably one of the self-locking kind."

"We'll see," Trim answered as he began to work away at the lock of one of the doors with a button hook that was attached to his pocket knife.

As it was a very ordinary lock it took him but a moment to pick it. Then the party entered the house.

Trim led them at once to the cellar.

He had lighted his lamp and he turned its rays upon the spot where he had left the body of Schruggs.

Again he stood still abruptly.

There was no body there!

"Well," said the captain, "where is the departed criminal?"

"The criminal has departed with a vengeance!" was Trim's response.

He threw the rays of the lamp all around the cellar. Nowhere was there any trace whatever of Schruggs.

Pemberton was mystified and so too was Trim, but he was thinking hard. He kept his thoughts to himself.

"I can show you that this is not a ghost story, anyhow," said Trim, presently.

With this he opened the door that led down to the tunnel.

The captain went down the stairs with him and presently they stood in the underground chamber where the murder had taken place.

The trapdoor was open just as it had been when Trim left it. A few feet below the level of the opening they saw water.

"The tide is going out, isn't it?" asked Trim.

"Certainly," replied the captain.

"Very well, then. In about three hours more or less the tunnel will be probably dry. It is already at a much lower level than it was when I was here."

"All of which," remarked Pemberton, "is interesting; but what interests me more is the disappearance of Schruggs. Are you positive that he was dead?"

"Dead for all time," answered Trim.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CUFF-BUTTON CLEW.

"Then," said Pemberton, "the fellow you call his highness must have returned here and carried away the body."

Trim nodded.

"I don't believe," said Trim, "that his highness carried the body far away. It's got to be found."

"I suppose it has," returned the captain, "but I don't see what will be gained by it."

Trim looked thoughtfully at the captain and asked:

"Doesn't it occur to you as a mighty queer thing that his highness should have come back to this house and taken away the body?

"Doesn't it strike you as if it was a particularly bold play?"

"Well, yes, it does. I should think that he would have got as far out of the way as possible."

"He doesn't want any evidences of his crime to be found," Trim declared.

"That may be," the captain half admitted, "but why should he take a course like this when he knows that you'll find it and that you'll therefore be aware that he's on his guard against you?"

"I suspect," Trim answered, "that his highness believes that I am even now lying drowned in the tunnel."

"But the open window must have told him that you had got out through the house?"

"Not necessarily.

"However, I shall have work to do tomorrow and I'm going to my hotel now to sleep.

"I think your men ought to search until they find the body of Schruggs."

"They shall do so. I'll have them scour the entire vicinity of this house and turn all Sydney upside down if necessary."

"You won't need to. The body is near by."

"You believe that?"

"Yes."

"What's your idea?"

"The tunnel is so built that it will be filled with water only at high tide. In other words, at low tide the water will all run out excepting a portion in the middle that is below the level of the sea.

"I think that his highness would reckon that a body thrown into the tunnel would either be carried out to sea and so lost or that it would lodge in the middle and then be so covered with water that no one would find it there even if they had the nerve to try for it."

"You shall see," exclaimed Pemberton, "that the Sydney police have nerve enough to try for anything.

"It is perfectly right that you should go to your hotel now, get a good sleep, and report to me as early in the morning as you see fit."

Trim went away at once, and it is only necessary to speak further of the operations of that night to say that when it came low tide Pemberton and his men entered the tunnel and went down the grade until they reached the level of water left there by the flood, and that they then waded in and found the body of Schruggs floating near the branch passage that led up to the Tigers' headquarters.

In spite of his long labors Trim arose early next morning and resumed his inquiries among real-estate agents.

He soon found that the house used by the Tigers as a headquarters was leased by a man who gave his name as Henry Gardner.

This information gave Trim a great deal of hope, for the initials of the name corresponded with the letters that formed the monogram on the broken cuff button.

It was still possible that Henry Gardner might be an assumed name, but it was not probable.

He could learn little about this man named Gardner from the agent, as, in the case of the house on the outskirts of Balmain, the man who leased it had paid his rent in advance and had never been to see the agent since.

The agent was one of those persons who cannot describe a man's appearance clearly, and Trim therefore got very little satisfaction as the result of his questions.

Nevertheless he felt greatly encouraged, and hurrying to the nearest hotel he consulted a directory for the purpose of finding whether the name Henry Gardner appeared in it.

It proved that there were three men in Sydney of that name.

It was still early in the morning and he decided to look them up before he reported to Captain Pemberton. So he hired a cab and asked to be driven to a certain number on Victoria Street which was set down in the directory as the business place of one of the Gardners.

Trim found it to be a small grocery. A middle-aged man was arranging boxes of vegetables upon the walk in front of the door.

"I say, mister," said Trim, "can you tell me whether Mr. Henry Gardner is about?"

"Hi fancy Hi can," was the prompt response, "for Hi'm that hindividual."

"Oh! your name is Henry Gardner, is it?"

"Hit is, sir. What can Hi do for you?"

"Nothing, I think, for you're not the Henry Gardner I'm looking for."

"Oh, then hit might be my father."

"Is your father's name Henry also?"

"Hit is."

"Where does he live?"

Gardner junior gave the street and number, and Trim on referring to his memorandum book found that it was another of the places given in the directory against the name Henry Gardner.

"That accounts for two of them," he said to himself. "Perhaps it's the third, for this man is certainly not his highness, and of course his father, who must be a very old fellow, could not be."

"I reckon," said Trim aloud, "that it isn't your father I'm looking for."

"You're sure hit's 'Enry Gardner, be you?"

"That's the name."

"Then it might be my cousin."

"Ah! yes, so it might. And where does he live?"

The grocer gave another direction, and Trim, having thanked him, drove away. The other direction was the third place noted in the directory as the residence of a Henry Gardner.

It was in a short street not far from the grocer's. The number proved to be a small house, the ground floor of which was given over to a cobbler's shop.

Trim entered the shop and, finding that the cobbler was talking to a customer, made a pretext of wishing to buy a pair of shoestrings.

In the course of this little transaction he learned easily enough that the man he was dealing with was Henry Gardner, and he was entirely satisfied that this one also could not possibly be his highness.

"Neither of these two Gardners," thought Trim as he returned to his cab, "is clever enough to disguise himself so as to deceive me, and besides that, I size them up as honest men anyhow.

"The third being the grocer's father is altogether too old, so I don't need to see him.

"Now, then, having traced all the Henry Gardners that can be found in the directory, I am forced to conclude either that the Henry Gardner who leased that house in Balmain gave a fictitious name or that there is a Henry Gardner in town who has managed to escape solicitors for the directory. I suppose it must be the atter case."

As he had come to a halt in this line of investigation, there was nothing better to do than to report at Captain Pemberton's office, and that he did next.

The captain had but just arrived when Trim went in.

In a few words Trim was informed of the finding of Schruggs' body and of the failure of the police to make any further progress in the matter.

"How far have you got?" asked the captain when he had concluded.

"Well," said Trim, "I've a small clew, but I haven't got very far in working it up."

As he said this he put his fingers into his pocket to take out the broken cuff button, which he had not yet mentioned to the captain.

He had not shown it before the door opened and an elderly man of very dignified appearance came hurriedly in.

"I hope you'll excuse me, Captain Pemberton," he said, "for coming in unannounced, but it is because I'm in a hurry and extremely anxious. I hope you'll be able to give me a moment of your attention at once."

"Surely, Mr. Henley," responded Captain Pemberton, rising. "I think our matter can wait a moment, can it not?"

The latter question was addressed to Trim, who promptly answered that it could and pushed the broken cuff button back into his pocket.

"Is it something of a private nature, Mr. Henley?" asked the captain of his visitor.

"Yes and no," was the response, with a hesitating glance at Trim. "I shouldn't care to have the reporters make note of it at present."

"This young man is not a reporter," interrupted the captain. "He's an American detective who is just now assisting our force.

"Permit me to introduce you. Mr. Henley, Mr. Trimble Carter."

"I am pleased to meet you, sir," said Mr. Henley, extending his hand. "You seem to be very young for a detective."

"He has a young body and an old head," exclaimed Pemberton.

"Ah!" said Henley; "then it'll be very well if he should listen to what I have to say, for it is not impossible that he may make some valuable suggestions."

Trim was not anxious to remain, and yet, as he really wanted to discuss his own case with Pemberton before proceeding further with it, he felt that there was nothing better to do than to take part in the conversation with this Mr. Henley.

He sat down, and Mr. Henley, taking a chair between him and the captain, began at once.

"I'm anxious about my son, captain."

"Indeed! What is the matter with him?"

"That is more than I can say. I've not seen him at all for three or four days, and I cannot learn that during that time he has been seen at any of his usual haunts."

"Isn't he off on some fishing or shooting excursion?"

"No. It is two or three years since he has indulged in that kind of pastime, and if he had gone now his friends at the club would know of it or he would have informed us. No, captain, his disappearance is a serious matter. I am convinced of it."

"You surely don't suspect anything like foul play, Mr. Henley?"

"I don't know what to think, captain."

The old gentleman's voice shook with agitation, and he paused to collect himself.

"Guy," he continued presently, "has been acting very strangely for some time past."

Here he paused and looked down at the floor.

"Don't be afraid to speak your worst thoughts here," said the captain, kindly. "Whatever they are, you may be sure that neither of us will betray any secrets."

"It is more than a year," said Mr. Henley in a low voice, "since I noticed the first signs of a change in Guy."

Again he hesitated, and the captain asked:

"Was it some sign of mental trouble?"

Mr. Henley glanced from the captain to Trim as if he was scared at the suggestion.

"God knows!" he answered. "I cannot tell. It would be difficult to make clear to you just what this change was like, but he became moody, silent and unsocial.

"He continued to live with us in Paramatta, but most of his time, nevertheless, was spent in the city."

"At his club, I suppose?"

"I suppose so, and yet it is impossible to account for all of his time there."

"Quite likely; but why should there be any cause for anxiety in that?"

"Well, because of late he has been with us less and less, and his associates at the club have noticed similar changes.

"Nobody has any good theory to suggest to account for them, and I am beside myself with anxiety."

"What would you have us do?"

"I would like to have you institute a quiet search for him."

"And yet you say you don't want us to make the matter public?"

"No, I'd rather not, for if he should turn up of his own accord he would be terribly angry. If you can get on his track by some quiet means I think it will be better."

"Very well, Mr. Henley, we'll try it. I suppose you have a photograph of your son with you that I can show to the detectives whom I shall assign to this matter?"

"I thought I had," he answered, "but I must have left it on my desk at the office. I will go and get it and bring it back within an hour."

"It will be better to do so.

"I've seen your son, though not for a long time, but it's quite likely that none of my detectives knows his face at all."

"I'll bring you the photograph," said Mr. Henley, speaking in a still more agitated tone, "and if—if anything should happen at the—morgue——"

"Don't distress yourself, Mr. Henley," remarked the captain. "I don't think that your son has committed suicide, and it is still less probable that he has met with foul play."

Mr. Henley shook his head sadly.

"I don't know what to think!" he muttered.

"I'm dreadfully anxious.

"I'll bring you the photograph, and I beg you to keep me informed of anything that may throw light upon his disappearance."

With this he shook hands with both Trim and the captain and left the room.

"He is one of our wealthiest and most respected men," remarked the captain as he sat down again.

"Now what were you going to tell me about that——"

"About what?"

"You said you had a clew."

"Ah, yes. Well, I reckon it's not worth talking of."

"Why not?"

"Because I have an idea I'll change my plan."

"What do you think of doing, then?"

"I think of hunting for Guy Henley."

Captain Pemberton looked displeased and surprised.

"I'm sorry," he said, "that you should think of deserting this case for a possible reward——"

"Reward be hanged!" interrupted Trim, impatiently. "Who has offered a reward?"

"Well, I suppose that you infer old Mr. Henley would put up handsomely for the discovery of his son's whereabouts?"

"It hadn't occurred to me."

"Oh!"

Pemberton said this in a tone that showed he did not believe Trim.

The young fellow was half inclined to be angry, but he reflected that after all Pemberton was not yet very well acquainted with him, so he laughed sarcastically and remarked:

"I'm thinking, captain, that it's quite possible that old Mr. Henley, instead of offering a reward for information about his son, would be quite willing, if he knew the facts, to pay double the price to keep the information away from you."

"Well, now you're talking in riddles!" exclaimed the captain.

"Am I?"

"Indeed you are. I don't understand at all what you are driving at.

"The Henleys are most respectable people. They have an elegant estate in Paramatta, which, as perhaps you know, is the most important suburb of Sydney."

"Yes, I know. It's a few miles out to the west, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"I think I'll run out there and see what I can find out about Guy Henley."

"You insist upon dropping this other case, then, do you?"

"Drop nothing!"

"Then why do you bother your head about this missing man, who quite likely is on a prolonged spree somewhere, who probably will turn up in the course of a day or two seedy and penniless, with promises to reform——"

"When Guy Henley turns up with promises to reform," interrupted Trim, "you'd better look for a mare's nest. Now what are you driving at, Trim?"

The boy reflected a moment.

He knew that Nick Carter and his father frequently kept their thoughts to themselves, not even expressing their suspicions to the police with whom they were associated.

He was tempted to follow the same course, for he had a pride in his work and he disliked the thought of being caught in a mistake.

It was possible that he might be mistaken here, and yet there seemed to be nothing particular to be gained by exasperating the captain, who had already been mystified several times by Trim's apparently queer conduct and who so far had found that everything Trim did was just as it should be; so after a little he remarked, quietly:

"I'm going to spend my time from this on in hunting for Guy Henley, because that is the name of his highness."

CHAPTER VII.

AN UNKNOWN ENEMY.

To say that Captain Pemberton was amazed would be putting it mildly.

"It will be hard to convince me of that!" he exclaimed.

"It won't take me long," Trim responded, "to prove to my own satisfaction whether I'm right or wrong."

"How so?"

"Didn't Mr. Henley say he was going to bring a photograph?"

"Ah, yes; and you hope to recognize the features?"

"I do."

"You'll be careful not to make any mistake?"

"I certainly will. The last thing I would want to do would be to put an innocent man into trouble or even into suspicion."

"That's right. And now tell me just what has led you to this conclusion."

Trim thereupon produced the broken cuff button and told the captain various details of his experiences that he had omitted to tell before.

He also reminded the officer that there were cases on record where men of wealth and good social standing had become the leaders of criminal organizations.

The captain knew of such instances, and finally remarked that possibly young Henley had become insane on the subject and that his mania would lead him to the commission of crimes as long as he lived.

"It's not my business," said Trim, "to ask whether he is insane or not. It's certain that he's got a clear head for details and a wholesome mind for organization.

"The thing I propose to do is to put a stop to his career."

"What a terrible blow it will be for his father and family," sighed the captain, "if your suspicions should prove to be correct."

"Yes. I'm sorry for the old gentleman, and here he comes."

An elegant carriage had drawn up in front of the station, out from which Mr. Henley alighted and proceeded to the captain's door.

"I've the photograph," he said, "and it is at your service, but I must repeat that I hope you will keep the matter private for the present."

The captain glanced at the photograph and laid it upon his desk. Trim did not even look toward it.

Mr. Henley nervously picked the photograph up and brought it to Trim.

"If you are engaged upon work in Sydney, Mr. Carter," he said, with a trembling voice, "you may yourself come across my son somewhere.

"This is an excellent likeness taken within two years; he has hardly changed since that time."

Trim held the photograph before his face and stared at it steadily for several seconds, then he handed it back and said, quietly:

"I should know him if I should see him."

"He has not been seen by any of us for nearly a week," responded the old gentleman, "and I can get no trace of him.

"I should be glad to answer any questions that it may occur to either of you to ask."

"Is there anything you would like to ask, Carter?" said the captain.

"No," Trim answered, "but I may take a run out to Paramatta this afternoon or evening."

"Do!" cried Mr. Henley. "We shall give you every assistance in our power."

After the exchange of a few more words the old gentleman again left the

office and Pemberton turned inquiringly to Trim.

"It's the man!" said the boy, quietly.

"No mistake?"

"I'm as sure of it as I am that I stand here."

"Then," replied Pemberton, "there ought not to be any very great difficulty in running him down?"

"No, I don't think there will be."

Trim smiled queerly as he said this, and the captain asked him what he was thinking of.

"I was recalling how I chased around town this morning," was the reply, "after men named Henry Gardner.

"You see, I made out the letters G and H on this monogram, and when I leaned over Schruggs as he was dying I spoke them in the wrong order. I said H. G. instead of G. H.

"There was a gleam in his eyes that I misunderstood.

"I thought it meant that I had hit it right. Instead of that the old villain must have felt a kind of triumph in seeing that I had guessed wrong.

"Now I think I could tell you a correct story of how Guy Henley, alias his highness, hired that house in Balmain."

"Do you mean the one over the other side of the hill?"

"No. He called himself Brown when he hired that, but I'm thinking of the other.

"I'm thinking that he went into the real-estate office, and being called upon to sign his name to some paper, the sleeve of his coat slipped up so that his cuff and the button were plainly shown.

"With his initials in sight, he would see at once that it might not do to sign the name of Brown, Jones, or Robinson to a document when he had a cuff button bearing letters that would not answer to such names, so he probably wrote the first name that occurred to him that had initials corresponding to his own, but he reversed them in order to disguise his identity as far as possible."

"And you think that's the way he came to call himself Henry Gardner?"

"I shouldn't be surprised if it was. It's unimportant, and I shan't give the matter any further thought."

Trim was true to his word, but the captain's curiosity was so aroused that at a later time he made a little investigation on his own account.

He went to the real-estate agent who had let the house, and from him learned that when the papers came to be signed the man who had hired the house bent over the table to write his name, and that as he did so his cuff button was fully exposed.

"That's a neat monogram you have there," remarked the agent.

"Yes," the man responded, and immediately wrote the name Henry Gardner upon the paper.

So it seemed that Trim had correctly guessed that part of the transaction.

Captain Pemberton and Trim discussed the new features of the case at some length before the young man left the office to resume his investigation.

The captain offered him the assistance of the best detectives on the force, but Trim thought he could proceed alone to better advantage.

"There are a good many questions to be asked," he said, "and it'll be better to stick to the old man's wish of keeping the thing private.

"It'll surprise me a good deal if Guy Henley doesn't believe that I'm lying drowned in the tunnel. As long as he thinks that, there is a chance of finding him right here in Sydney."

"Keep that disguise on," remarked the captain, "and he'll never recognize you."

"I'm not so sure about that, for he has very sharp eyes."

There is no need to narrate how Trim passed the next three or four hours. They were spent just as detectives have to pass a great deal of their time—asking the same sort of questions of a great many people.

He was trying to learn all he could about the habits and character of Guy Henley and trying to do so without attracting any especial attention to himself.

He succeeded satisfactorily in this respect and met with no incident that need be told.

It was about the middle of the afternoon when he thought that he had learned all that he could in this line, and as no clew to Henley's whereabout had been found up to that time, he decided that it would

be best to run out to Paramatta and see what might be discovered there.

He accordingly hired a cab, as he did not wish to be under the necessity of waiting for trains at suburban stations.

It was about an hour's drive out, and when he arrived there he made it his first business to look over the Henley estate, which was a large one lying just outside the village.

Then he continued his line of inquiries as he had done in the city, proceeding very cautiously and finding little if anything that threw light upon the matter.

The main point was that he satisfied himself that Guy had not been at home since two days before the uprising in the jail, which has been described in a previous number of this library and which led to the discovery of the Tigers' organization.

He was beginning to wonder how he should get on the track of Henley, who seemed to have hidden himself very safely, when he entered his cab and ordered the driver to take him back to Sydney.

It was then after sundown.

A short distance out from Paramatta an axle broke.

Trim got out of the cab at once, and he and the driver set to work to see whether the damage could be repaired on the spot.

"Hi don't see 'ow hit could 'ave 'appened," the driver exclaimed, "for the haxle was sound as a berry this mornin'."

Trim was leaning over the broken axle, and it took him no time at all to see how the accident had happened.

The axle bar had been sawed part way through.

"Where did you spend your time," he asked, "while I was looking over the Henley estate?"

"Hin a public 'ouse, sir."

"And where was the cab?"

"Hin the sheds at the back of the 'ouse, sir."

"That was when it was done," thought Trim.

"All this time that I've been hunting for Henley and thinking that I disguised myself so he could not recognize me, he has actually been on my track, and even now may be near me."

He stood up and looked around.

It was still light enough to see a considerable distance.

There were no houses near, and nobody was in sight either upon the road or in the fields alongside.

"If this accident was designed to take place at this spot," the boy thought, "I've got to do something to bring the enemy from under cover. I'll see if I can draw him out."

He then turned to the driver and said aloud:

"There's no use of thinking of getting back to Sydney by cab."

"No, sir, not by this cab, hat hany rate."

"Then I must take a train. Do you know where the nearest railroad station is?"

"Yes, sir. Hit's hat out a 'alf mile further hon, and you can get to hit quicker by crossing the fields toward that ridge."

"Does the railroad run below that ridge?"

"Hit goes right through hit, sir. There's a deep cut there."

"Oh! And how long will it be before a train goes to Sydney?"

"About ten minutes, sir. Hi should think you can make hit hif you 'urry across the fields."

"I'll try it."

Trim set out across the fields, proceeding at a rapid pace, and presently arrived at the edge of the railroad cut.

It was fully thirty feet to the bottom, where he could just distinguish the gleaming rails in the darkness. A quarter of a mile away he saw the lights of the railroad station.

He started along the edge of the cut in that direction.

As he approached some low trees he turned aside.

With all his nerve, Trim was cautious, and being ever on the alert, he had no desire to fall into an ambush anywhere, least of all in a place where there might be a long fall with a broken neck to pay for it.

His caution served him a good turn this time, for he had hardly entered into the shadow of the trees when a light whirring noise caused him to throw up his left arm.

He did so just in time to ward off the loop of a lariat that came spinning toward him. As it was, the lariat wound itself around his arm, and he was nearly pulled to the ground by a terrific tug.

Trim instantly unwound the lariat and then threw himself flat upon the ground.

Just as he did so there was a flash a few feet in front of him, a report of a pistol, and a ball whistled over his head. Then there was the sound of feet crashing toward him.

Trim leaped up just as his adversary reached him and grappled with him.

It proved to be a tall, broad-shouldered man who could not be mistaken for his highness.

This was not Guy Henley, although he could not see the man's face in the darkness.

They struggled in silence, Trim's enemy gradually dragging him in spite of all his efforts toward the edge of the railroad cut.

The young fellow exerted all his strength and tried every trick he knew of wrestling and boxing to get the advantage of his powerful enemy.

It was a most unequal combat. The big fellow had strength enough to crush the young American in his hands; nevertheless, Trim gave him a hard job of it.

At one time he got the big fellow down on his knees, but before he could take advantage of that situation his enemy had risen again and was dragging him on.

The unknown assailant tumbled upon a loose stone and fell at the very edge of the cut.

Trim gave a leap backward, caught the limb of a tree with one hand, and held on with all his might.

His enemy had him by the shoulder, but his hold was loosened by his stumbling, and before he could catch it again he had begun to slip over the edge of the cut.

With a gasp of alarm he gripped his hands hard into Trim's coat and tried to pull himself up.

He might have done so, for the coat was of very strong cloth, but Trim quickly slipped his arm out of the sleeve of the coat and then laid that hand upon the branch of the tree.

Holding on with that, he let go with his other hand, and the weight of the man's body promptly pulled the coat off of that arm.

With a rattling and bumping sound, mingled with a cry of horror, the man fell down the face of the cut to the railroad tracks, leaving Trim breathless but comparatively uninjured at the top.

The young fellow had no sooner realized that he had escaped the death his assailant intended for him when he became aware of the roaring of an approaching train.

It was a single-track road below him, and the cut was very narrow.

It instantly occurred to him that his assailant must certainly be run over, for the force of his fall would surely throw his body across the rails.

There was a shrill shriek from the engine's whistle and a great shaking and rumbling noise, showing that the engineer had applied the brakes and reversed steam at once.

Trim pulled himself by the branch of the tree to a perfectly safe position, but even then so great was his horror of what must be taking place below that he did not venture to look down.

Instead he ran down the slope of the hill through which the cut was made until he came to the place where the railroad tracks ran into the open.

The train had just come to a standstill and Trim ran alongside, closely following two or three trainmen who had jumped from the cars and were hurrying into the cut.

"He's probably stone dead," one of them remarked; and another responded:

"It's a wonder he didn't throw the train off the rails."

CHAPTER VIII.

CHEATING THE GALLOWS.

Passengers were sticking their heads out of the windows of the compartments of the cars, but as the trainmen had locked the doors none of them got out.

There were, therefore, only two or three persons besides Trim who had discovered a bruised body lying up beside the tracks.

The man was not dead, but he was in

his last gasps. He still clutched in his hands Trim's coat.

The lad knelt before him and exclaimed in astonishment:

"Archie Grosvenor!"

"Yes," said the dying man, feebly. "I'm Grosvenor, and you won the last trick in our game, my boy."

Grosvenor was an Englishman whose crooked dealings had given Trim opportunities for work before.

His bold theft of a gold mine and his attempts to work a scheme for raising money by abduction, as well as Trim's successful efforts to outwit him, have been narrated in "Trim Among the Bushmen" and "Trim's Double Header," in Nos. 5 and 6.

Trim's astonishment at finding Grosvenor here was perfectly natural, and the reason for it was shown in his next remark.

"I left you locked up in Broken Hill."

"Yes, you did," Grosvenor admitted; "and if you'd been there I probably couldn't have got away. As it was, I escaped and came here bound to find you and get revenge."

"Then it was you who sawed the axle of my cab, was it?"

Grosvenor nodded.

One of the train hands who had gathered around remarked that possibly there was a doctor on board who might relieve the injured man, and he ran off at once to make inquiries.

Grosvenor looked after him with a grim smile.

"It's too late for any doctor to do me good," he muttered.

"Make him as easy as possible," said another trainman, coming up with a carriage cushion.

Grosvenor feebly put out his hand to push the cushion away.

"I don't want it," he groaned. "Nothing will make me comfortable except to tell this young fellow what I know."

"Is there something you want to say to me?" asked Trim.

"Yes. You're hunting for the last of the Tigers?"

"I am," Trim answered. "You don't mean to tell me you're one of them?"

"I'm pretty near it. I was not in the gang, but I was well acquainted with Guy Henley.

"I don't hesitate to mention his name because I know that you are on to all his doings."

"Yes, and I shall capture him."

"There is no doubt about it!

"I shall die easier if I can feel that I've put you in the way of running that great villain down."

Grosvenor paused a moment, for it was only by a great effort that he could speak at all.

Trim waited in silence for him to resume.

"I've been villain enough," he said presently, "but Guy was more of a villain in one day than I could be in a year."

"That's true," said Trim, "and you'll be doing a good deal to make up for your crimes if you'll give me a pointer now that will help in bringing him to justice."

"I'm going to do it.

"I came straight to Sydney from Broken Hill and got here after the attempted jail breaking.

"I heard how you were mixed up in that, and I made up my mind that I would lay for you.

"Then I ran across Henley. I knew him well enough to speak freely and told him all about how you chased me.

"He believed that he had done for you. He said that he had drowned you in a tunnel over in Balmain."

"Didn't he suspect," asked Trim, "that I had escaped when he found the body of Schruggs in the cellar of the house instead of in the underground room below it?"

"No. He thought Schruggs had managed to crawl up the stairs before his death, and as Henley himself had left the house by way of a window instead of through a door, he didn't think that it could be you who had left the window open.

"It wasn't until this afternoon that he was convinced that you had escaped."

"How did he learn that?"

"I told him."

"You?"

"Yes. I kept my eyes on Pemberton's office, for I knew that if you were alive you'd turn up there some time. You were well disguised, but I was certain that I knew your gait and your general shape.

"I made up my mind that it was you, and followed you around like a shadow all the afternoon.

"Then Henley and I put up a job by which we should manage to get you out to this railroad cut.

"I thought I could do for you, but I didn't, so there's no use talking about that."

"No," said Trim. "I'm right sorry for you, but the important thing now is, where is Henley?"

"He wouldn't risk showing himself," said Grosvenor, "and remained in Sydney.

"It was my plan to chuck you into the cut, where you would either be killed by the fall or by this train, and then I was going to go by the same train to Sydney.

"He will be waiting for me in the station. Hustle yourself aboard this train and you'll catch him there."

These words were uttered very slowly and with great difficulty. Toward the last Trim could hardly hear the dying man speak.

He had told all that he could tell, and with that his last strength departed. Another moment and Archie Grosvenor was dead.

The train was still waiting, of course, and when it started on again it bore both Grosvenor's dead body and Trim.

The lad had found a place in a forward compartment, and he persuaded the trainman to leave the door unlocked, so that he could jump out the moment the train arrived in Sydney.

Grosvenor had told him the truth. Nevertheless the capture of Henley was not such an easy matter, after all.

The station agent near the cut telegraphed the information to Sydney that a man had been run down. The news got abroad through the station, and although it was not known just who the man was, Henley had his suspicions aroused and kept out of sight as the train came in.

He was so well disguised that his best friend would not have known him, and Trim looked in vain for him among the crowd upon the platform.

The shrewd villain was there, however, and he saw Trim.

Failing to see Grosvenor and suspecting Trim's identity in spite of the lad's disguise, Henley calmly crossed the station to a train that was just about to start out and got aboard.

He might then have escaped for the time being if it had not been that his anxiety to know what Trim would do led him to a careless action.

Just as the train was going out he thrust his head out of a window and looked back.

Trim caught sight of him.

The boy's eyes were as shrewd and keen as Henley's. Disguises amounted for little with either of these persons.

Trim knew his man and knew instantly what to do.

He stood stock still, as if he had not recognized his highness until Henley drew in his head. Then Trim made a break for the train.

A porter tried to stop him, but Trim knocked the man down. It was his only way to accomplish what he was after.

"Act now," he thought, "and explain afterward must be my policy."

Railroad trains in Australia are made up like those in England. There are no open cars of the American pattern and no plaforms between the cars.

The ends of the cars are blank walls with a little projection just above the trucks for the coupling apparatus.

The last car had already passed Trim when he began to run. The train had not gained much headway, however, and he soon had his hands upon the rear car.

As the three doors opening into the compartments of the car were closed and locked and the windows down, it was impossible for him to get aboard the train by entering a compartment.

There was only one way by which it would be possible for him to travel with the leader of the Tigers. That was to get upon the coupling apparatus of the rear car and hang on there, if possible, until the train should come to a stop, when he might make his way forward and perhaps get in the same compartmentwith Henley.

People who were waiting at the station and whose attention was attracted by his running after the train uttered a cry of amazement as they saw what he was about to attempt.

There was no one near enough to restrain him.

He sprung from the station platform just before he reached the end of it, and landed with his feet upon the coupler.

He had his eyes open when he did this, and if he had not there is no doubt that he would have been jolted off at once and probably killed.

A slender iron rod ran up the end of the car connecting the coupler with the brake inside the baggage car.

Trim reached for this rod and caught it with both hands. Then for two or three seconds he swayed back and forth, in danger every instant of being shaken off.

His grip held, however, and by the time the train was well clear of the station he felt secure.

It was by no means a comfortable perch. There was hardly more than room enough for his feet upon the coupler, and the iron rod lay so close to the wall of the car that he could barely keep his fingers upon it.

Trim's blood was up, and with his prey so nearly within reach it would have taken more than the shaking of a railroad train to make him let go.

He hung on, therefore, while the train rushed out of the city and thundered across the open fields of the country.

About two miles out from town the railroad crossed a river and a narrow valley through which it ran by a long and very high trestle.

"I shouldn't want to drop off here," thought Trim as he looked down and saw the gleaming of water far below him in the darkness.

He did not fall off, but shortly after the train left the trestle upon the other side of the valley its speed began to slacken.

It was then much harder than before for the boy to keep his hold. He wondered why the train should stop there, for he knew that there was no village in that vicinity.

The fact was that the train dispatcher in Sydney, having been informed that a young man had leaped upon the last car of this train, had telegraphed to the first signal station beyond the river, with instructions to stop the train and arrest the man if he was still clinging to the rear car.

None of the train hands knew, of course, why the train should stop at this point, and all of them opened the doors of their compartments to get off when the train should come to a standstill and find out what was the matter.

Henley, who knew the road perfectly well, saw that there was some unusual reason in the train's stopping at this point.

He at once jumped to the conclusion that his presence had been discovered there and that orders had been telegraphed ahead to stop the train and search for him.

He was alone in a compartment.

While the train was slowing down he looked out of the windows on each side.

On one side he saw the lights of the signal station, on the other was open country.

He opened the window on the open-country side, and just as the train stopped climbed through it and darted away.

He had not taken more than a pace when strong hands were laid upon his coat collar and he was thrown to the ground, while a ringing voice exclaimed:

"Ah, there, my Tiger! You're a troublesome sort of beast, but I've got you at last!"

Trim, suspecting that Henley would make just such a move as he did, had dropped from the train before it stopped and ran along on the side opposite the signal station.

He remembered which car Henley was in and arrived at the end of it just as the villain climbed out.

Taken entirely by surprise, Henley could offer no resistance at the start, and before he had begun to struggle Trim had handcuffs upon his wrists.

Then his highness became suddenly very quiet.

"The game is up!" he remarked, calmly. "You'll not find me trouble-

some any longer, for I admit at last that you're my master.

"You'll find me a tame Tiger from this on!"

Trim was too excited and exultant over his success to pay much attention to the fellow's words, but if he had he would not have believed that Henley would behave himself.

"Give him a chance to escape," thought Trim, "and he'll take it."

Of course there were a lot of questions to be answered from the railroad employees, who speedily became aware of what had happened.

There is no need to relate how Trim explained matters, for in the course of a few minutes he and his prisoner were occupying a compartment together while the train sped along on its journey.

They were going to stop at the next station and there take the first train back to Sydney.

Word to this effect was telegraphed from the signal station to Captain Pemberton, who promptly went with a patrol wagon to the station in Sydney, where he waited for Trim and his prisoner to arrive.

The captain waited in vain.

Henley sat perfectly still beside Trim until they came to the station where they were to change cars.

Just before arriving there Trim took the precaution to put one of the handcuffs upon his own wrist, thus linking himself to his prisoner.

Henley smile at this move.

"That's really unnecessary," he said. "I'm bound to go with you." Then he added under his breath, "and wherever I go you'll go, too."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Trim, sharply.

"I'm bound to go to court and then to prison," was the response, "and I fancy you'll accompany me."

"You'll have to go further than the prison," Trim retorted, "for yours is a hanging offense."

"I suppose it is," replied Henley, despondently.

They had but a short time to wait at the station before a returning train came along.

Not wishing to annoy other passengers, Trim secured a compartment for himself and his prisoner.

There was a little delay then before the train started.

Just as it was about to move on a trainman ran up to the compartment, unlocked it, opened the door and handed a telegram to Trim.

It was from Pemberton, congratulating him upon his success.

Having read it, Trim crumpled it and put it in his pocket.

"Well," remarked Henley, with a long breath, "I suppose that I'm getting nearer and nearer the gallows every minute now!"

"That's what you are, boss!" returned Trim.

Henley leaned back against the cushions and closed his eyes.

Trim watched him narrowly. He wondered what could be going on in the brain of this remarkable scoundrel.

It did look as if Henley, having exhausted every possible means of outwitting his pursuer, had given up and would make no more trouble.

"He probably sees that the case is hopeless," Trim thought.

Presently Henley shuddered.

"Anything the matter?" asked Trim.

"I was thinking of my father," replied his highness. "No son of his should ever end his life upon the gallows."

"You ought to have thought of that before."

"I'm thinking of it now, young man, and I tell you that if I find myself on the gallows I will be the most surprised person in Australia."

Henley opened his eyes as he said this, but immediately closed them again and remained quiet, with his head thrown back upon the cushion.

"Perhaps he thinks," reflected Trim, "that just as Grosvenor got away after I had had him locked up he too will manage to escape."

Just then the noise of the train changed to a hollow rumble.

It had come to the high trestle that Trim had observed while he was clinging to the rear car of the outbound train.

The lad glanced out of the window, as

though it was now so dark that nothing could be seen excepting the lights of the city far away in the distance.

He had no more than turned his head in the direction of the window than Henley started up, and with a great bound leaped to the car door.

It was all done like a flash.

The trainman who had opened the door to hand in the telegram had neglected to lock it.

With one wrench Henley had the door open, and before Trim had more than begun to stir he had leaped out. Handcuffed as he was to his prisoner, Trim followed him.

Over the edge of the trestle they went whirling in the air, bound for certain destruction, it seemed.

As they went whizzing toward the bottom this thought flashed across Trim's mind:

"So this is the way the chief of the Tigers intends to cheat the gallows!"

If Trim had turned his head a half second sooner there would have been nothing more to tell about him, for then the pair would have fallen upon the rocky side of the gulch and their lives would have been dashed out.

That difference of a fraction of a second carried them just so much further over the chasm so that when they landed they fell upon the soft mud upon the edge of the river and fate was kind to the daring young detective.

Henley struck first, Trim falling then upon his body.

A man who was paddling about the river spearing for eels caught just a glimpse of the flying bodies as they came down from the train.

He directed his boat at once to the spot where they fell. He found there one man almost covered with the mud and the other lying across him. Both were unconscious.

The fisherman managed to get both into his boat and pulled rapidly down stream to the nearest house.

There it was seen that one of the two men was still alive. Restoratives were applied, and presently Trim came to consciousness and told how it had happened.

His prisoner had escaped the gallows, but he himself, as he thought it all over, was glad enough to realize that he had escaped with his life.

With the death of Henley there ended all possibility of any further trouble from the organization of which he had been the remarkable head.

Trim was as highly thought of by the authorities of Sydney as if he had succeeded in bringing his highness to the punishment that the law would have given him.

The last trace of the Tigers was wiped out when, shortly after the death of Henley, a steamer that had been chartered by them to carry the convicts to an island was captured by a government cruiser.

The officers and crew were innocent of any direct connection with the gang, but the steamer was in charge of a notorious criminal who had been banished from Australia.

This was Trim's last work in Sydney, and when he had done all that was required of him in the way of giving evidence against the many prisoners that had been taken through him he started for New York.

He went by way of Cape Town, Africa, thinking to take advantage of the situation to see a part of the world with which he was not familiar.

This led to his taking part in an investigation that had a most important effect upon his career as a detective.

An account of it may be found in "Trim in Cape Town; or, The Man With a Strange Limp," in No. 9.

[THE END.]

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